



Academic Affairs Committee

March 22, 2022

1:45 pm

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dean Priddy (Chair); Margaret S. Benjamin; Mona Edwards; Betsy S. Oakley; Tim Rice; Hazael Mengesha

OTHERS PRESENT: Chancellor Franklin Gilliam; Provost Debbie Storrs, Bob Shea, Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance; Jerry Blakemore, General Counsel; Terri Shelton, Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Engagement; Beth Fischer, Vice Chancellor for University Advancement; Waiyi Tse, Chief of Staff; Kelly Harris, Assistant Secretary to the Board; and other members of the administration, faculty, staff, and general public.

PROCEEDINGS:

Chair Priddy called the meeting to order at 1:45pm and read the conflict-of-interest statement as required by the North Carolina Ethics Act. No conflicts were identified.

The roll call was read, and a quorum was confirmed.

On roll call vote, the minutes of the November 30, 2021 Academic Affairs Committee meeting were unanimously approved as presented without additions or corrections.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

AAC – 1 Academic Affairs Budget Update (Storrs)

Provost Debbie Storrs presented information on the university’s response and process to the budget challenges triggered by factors such as cohort drag and the pandemic. She explained that decisions are being made in accordance with the values of shared fate, transparency, shared governance, broad consultation, communication, and student success. Reductions are being made strategically and are not across-the-board, according to our strategic framework and priorities. UNCG leadership is working to identify initiatives, programs, and practices that they may rethink, pause, or stop altogether. This includes reevaluating filling vacant positions, enabling units to think creatively about reorganizing, consolidating, and sharing support services across the unit or through cross-unit collaborations. Leadership is also conducting educational outreach. Provost Storrs and Vice Chancellor Bob Shea have presented numerous “university budget 101” talks for multiple groups, including at the August 2021 Board of Trustees retreat. Meetings and discussions have been held to foster a shared understanding of the funding model, revenue, and expenses, as well as to provide clarity on the relationship between enrollments and budget with Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, Chairs/Heads/Directors,

Academic Deans, Provost Council, and the UNCG Foundation Board. Academic Affairs has made some changes and will be taking strategic steps to thrive, including investment in student success initiatives, marketing and outreach efforts, reorganizations, and cohort actions such as changes to orientation, instituting summer course revisions, and utilizing enhanced early warning methods to identify students at risk and offer support services. Those services will be key moving forward. There has been a significant spike in grades of D, F, and W in the Fall term for new freshmen. The faculty report that the largest driver of grade performance challenges has to do with students being unable to confront the work. Most regularly attend class but are not turning in assignments. All indications are that this challenge has been brought about by the pandemic, and especially by the difference in expectations and consequences at UNCG compared to the interrupted high school experience students are bringing with them. The teams in Student Success, Student Affairs, the University Teaching and Learning Center, and the academic units are working hard to help affected students find their way back to good academic standing, while planning for a similar cohort to arrive in Fall 2022. Much of the work being undertaken focuses on helping students transition academically and socially from virtual high school classes to in person college classes, and in particular on developing good academic citizenship habits early in their first semester as college students. These efforts include redesigning courses, embedding peer mentors who can model and encourage appropriate academic behavior, and making changes to how students are oriented.

AAC – 2 Esports Update (Grieve, Borchert, Brown, Byrd)

Bill Brown and Erick Byrd from the Bryan School of Business and Economics gave a presentation on the Esports Management Concentration in the Hospitality and Tourism Management Program. The Concentration focuses on event organization, advertising, and promotions, all of which depend on sound planning, management, and execution. The concentration focuses on these aspects, preparing students for the esports management field by providing a robust business background through the foundation of business and specialized event courses. Students will also have opportunities to work with the UNCG eSports arena as well as other local and regional events. Greg Grieve and John Borchert in the Department of Religious Studies also presented on the emerging field of religion and video games and the ways in which religious practices and media technologies intersect across American religious histories. Through the Religious Studies Department, UNCG has also launched a new videogaming research network with the goal of bringing together scholars and students at the University to create a hub of research and learning around videogames and their cultures. The Network is made up of faculty from across the campus, representing a wide variety of disciplines in the College of Arts and Sciences and beyond. Videogaming and esports have taken over the global media landscape. Beginning in 2016, videogame sales have doubled movie box office sales and esports leagues are bringing in annual viewership of almost 500 million. Esports is clearly a business that links to all areas of tourism and hospitality. North Carolina is already a leader in esports events, and the state is looking to make further investments.

Action Item

Chair Priddy moved to convene in closed session pursuant to the North Carolina Open Meetings Law, Section § 143-318.11(2), in order to prevent the premature disclosure of an honorary degree, scholarship, prize, or similar award. Trustee Tim Rice made the motion, which was seconded by Trustee Mona Edwards. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Members of the public were invited to remain in the open session.

Closed Session

AAC – 3 Candidate for Honorary Degree (Storrs)
3.1 Nomination Packet One

General Account of Closed Session Discussion

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dean Priddy (Chair); Margaret S. Benjamin; Mona Edwards; Betsy S. Oakley; Tim Rice; Hazael Mengesha

OTHERS PRESENT: Chancellor Franklin Gilliam; Provost Debbie Storrs; Beth Fischer, Vice Chancellor for University Advancement; Waiyi Tse, Chief of Staff; Kelly Harris, Assistant Secretary to the Board.

AAC – 3 Candidates for Honorary Degrees

Provost Storrs reviewed with the Committee one nomination for conferral of an honorary degree as recommended by the Honorary Degree Committee. Following discussion, the Committee returned to open session.

Open Session

Chair Priddy invited a motion to approve the honorary degree nomination as presented in agenda item AAC – 3. Trustee Mona Edwards made the motion, which was seconded by Trustee Betsy Oakley. On roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Priddy noted that item AAC – 3 would be recommended to the full board for approval during the March 24, 2022 meeting.

Information Items

AAC – 4 Update on Research and Engagement

Vice Chancellor Terri Shelton gave an update on Research and Engagement. External funding of scholarly activities continues to be strong. While awards are down relative to this time last year, we are well ahead of FY 20, and the dollar amount requested is up. We continue to focus on identifying opportunities for external funding to support UNCG’s scholarship as well as strategies for enhancing the quality of those proposals.

The following additional information items were on the meeting agenda. There were no questions or comments about any of these items.

AAC – 5 Summary of Action Items Approved by Authority Delegated to the Chancellor, for the Period of November 14, 2020 – November 12, 2021

AAC – 6 Report on Annual Appointments to Academic Advisory Boards

AAC – 7 Candidates Awarded Degrees and Certificates in December 2021 (Storrs)

AAC – 8 Institute to Promote Athlete Health & Wellness Name Change (Storrs)

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kelly Harris".

Kelly Harris
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees